



District
Management
Group

10 MISTAKES TO AVOID

Shifting Resources Strategically to Fund District Priorities

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Shifting Resources Strategically to Fund District Priorities

Given the “new normal,” districts need to find funds for their priorities from within existing budgets. It *can* be done, and these 10 lessons learned may help guide the way.

1

DON'T ASSUME THAT DOING MORE FOR STUDENTS REQUIRES MORE MONEY.

It is critical for district leaders to set the tone and communicate their conviction that despite tight budgets, the district can raise achievement by redirecting funds to district priorities.

2

DON'T USE THE DATA YOU HAVE; USE THE DATA YOU NEED.

Uncovering opportunities often requires districts to collect different and more detailed data than is readily available.

3

DON'T ANALYZE STAFFING NEEDS ONLY AT THE SCHOOL OR DEPARTMENT LEVEL.

To find opportunities, you need to go to a more granular level. For example, simply looking at average class sizes across the district is not likely to highlight areas of opportunity. Instead, look at class sizes at the classroom and section level to uncover resources to shift.

4

DON'T BUILD STAFFING PLANS BASED ON CURRENT STAFFING. START WITH PROJECTED STUDENT ENROLLMENT.

It is normal to want to keep the resources you have at each school from year to year; however, it is shifting enrollment at the course and grade level that should drive staffing.

5 | DON'T TREAT FEDERAL FUNDS DIFFERENTLY THAN THE OPERATING BUDGET.

The operating budget is closely scrutinized by district leaders, but grant budgets are often handled by a federal funds manager or program coordinator. The superintendent and central office cabinet should review a coordinated budget that combines the operating budget and major grant budget to ensure that funds are allocated to best support strategic initiatives.

7 | DON'T TAKE "NO" FOR AN ANSWER.

Uncovering opportunities to shift resources can be complicated and confusing, and can seem downright impossible. Don't assume you are out of options. A "can do" attitude, outside expertise, benchmarking, and granular data can help districts overcome obstacles and find creative solutions.

9 | DON'T FOCUS ON MORE; FOCUS ON BETTER.

Often, in the attempt to ensure there are enough people to help students who struggle, districts rely on a great many noncertified staff. But don't hire paraprofessionals because you think you can't afford reading specialists, math interventionists, or certified behaviorists. Remember that more isn't the same as better when it comes to student achievement.

6 | DON'T ASSUME THE PERSON IN CHARGE WILL BE THE MOST KNOWLEDGEABLE.

Fearing noncompliance, leaders like grant managers and special education directors may be less likely to uncover opportunities for using resources differently. Look to other district leaders or engage outside experts to help find opportunities.

8 | DON'T USE CASELOAD ALONE TO DETERMINE STAFFING LEVELS FOR SPECIAL EDUCATORS.

Effective and well-conceived staffing formulas should take into account not only caseload, but also the amount of student support time required by IEPs, the amount of time teachers should spend with students, and the desired group size.

10 | DON'T MAKE THIS A ONE-TIME EXERCISE.

Districts need to remain responsive to shifting enrollment and changing student needs to ensure the most efficient allocation of resources. Incorporate the collection and analysis of detailed data into your planning and budgeting process. A close examination of enrollment, staffing, student needs, and allocation of funds should happen every year.